for the Mental Health hearing
on Sept. 12, 2013

First of all, I applaud Gov. Synder for appointing the Mental Illness Commission and I thank the members for coming.

My name is Carol Garvelink. I've been dealing with my son's serious mental illness for over 30 years and with the MI mental health system almost as long. I could write a book about the inadequacies of the system but now I will describe the most problematic situations which need attention.

Every serious mentally ill person needs case management. These providers can and should advocate for comprehensive treatment which should include regular psychotherapy for the patient, problem solving for the patient's best interest and coordinating the patient's care. The case manager needs to do crisis intervention but many crises can be prevented with the earlier methods I've just described.

About 4 years ago, my son was phased out of case management because he was supposedly "doing too well." It didn't take long for him to have a major crisis which put him back in the hospital. Upon release from the hospital, he still wasn't reinstated into case management, even after I pleaded for that at a court hearing. Finally, last spring my son's

psychiatrist became alarmed after meeting with him so she ordered that my son receive case management again.

Of course, effective case management for the patients requires more funding but if it can prevent hospitalization or criminal behavior, it will save money. When case managers have very high case loads, they can only respond to the crises and certainly don't have time for prevention efforts. I think case managers have too much paperwork which gives them less time to spend with patients or advocate for them.

Another problematic area is the Adult Foster Care. My son has lived in AFC homes for almost 25 years. We've seen lack of supervision, filthy bedrooms with terrible beds, unpacked garbage piled up in the yard, drug using staff, not enough food or poorly prepared food. AFC homes need to be more closely monitored and regulations need to be enforced!

My son has greatly benefited from a day program in Grand Rapids. However, it's not within walking distance so he has to take the bus. That worked very well until his bus pass expired last spring. He could not handle the complicated process of getting a new one. His case manager claimed it was my job, not hers. The transportation lady at Cherry St. CMH

said she could not do it either. So I had to make many phone calls to DHS to get the bus pass renewed. Finally it happened. Now my son will be able to get to his appointments and the day program. Why is the bus pass renewal such a complicated process? Many patients cannot maneuver the bureaucracy. It's no wonder patients fall through the cracks!

I strongly urge all families of the mentally ill and the professionals to become political activists. Talk to your state legislators about the problems and great need for adequate funding of services. Support and campaign for those candidates who understand and truly care about our chronic mentally ill citizens.

Thank you.

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